

1866 Campaign – Prussia's Nightmare General Game admin Brief

The Austro-Prussian War 1866 – Prussia's Nightmare

General Admin Notes for all Players

Introduction

The main problem with recreating the campaign of 1866 is that historically the result is a forgone conclusion due to the fact that the Austrians are hampered by an incompetent and unworkable command structure and that the players have 20:20 hindsight. Under these restrictions it is probably impossible for the Austrian players to even force a draw let alone win.

However, the Prussian studies for any war with Austria show that the Prussian General Staff perceived the threat from the Austria in a very different light. Three main factors affected their thinking:

- Numbers: It was believed in Prussia that the Austrians, once fully mobilized, would not only have numerical parity with the Prussians but would probably outnumber Prussia during the early stages of any conflict.
- Offensive Operations: It was believed that if it came to war the Austrians would assume the offensive and strike either NW towards Berlin, or NE to towards Breslau in Silesia. It was also considered a possibility that the Austrian's might do both at once, with support from their Saxon and Bavarian allies.
- Commanders: The man given the task of commanding the Austrian North Army, Field Marshal Benedek was, in the view of many Prussian officers, the "Austrian Blucher". Historically Benedek was a broken reed during the campaign, and who had been promoted well beyond his ability and a Prussian General Staff assessment of Benedek noted that he was "No commander-in-chief nor strategist". However prior to the war Benedek, nicknamed the "Lion of Solferino", was an international celebrity with an outstanding reputation as an aggressive commander. Von Moltke, considering the possibility of an Austrian attack, wrote that "The mere name Benedek means that he come come quickly, dealing blows left and right". Interestingly

As a result, the Prussians had to plan to meet the threat of a rapid Austrian advance under an aggressive commander. However, the Prussian high command could not imagine the level of incompetence amongst the Austrian commanders. It was as if the Austrian Emperor had deliberately chosen the worst possible generals to lead his largest Army.

For this campaign however I suggest that an influential group of officers in Vienna have convinced the Emperor to send his best men to command the army in Bohemia.

It is this "Prussian Nightmare" scenario that the campaign will form the basis of the campaign. Certain factors will be adjusted by the umpire to balance the scenario in order to give both sides a fighting chance and to allow the players the chances to make their own decisions under new circumstances rather than simply following the course of historical events.

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Conduct of the Campaign

The players will take the following roles:

Prussian

Prussian Royal Headquarters - General von Moltke – Chief of Staff
Prince Frederick Charles – commanding the Prussian 1st Army
Crown Prince Frederick William – commanding the Prussian 2nd Army
General von Herwarth – commanding the Prussian Army of the Elbe

Austrian

Field Marshal Archduke Albrecht – Commander of The North Army
Feldzeugmeister Ludwig von Benedek - Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander
General Franz John – Chief of Staff of the Austrian North Army
Crown Prince Albert of Saxony – commander of the Saxon Army

Players will be briefed on their initial mobilisation plans, deployment, orders of battle and objectives. Each turn the commanders will issue orders to their subordinates as required, who will then produce their own orders for their commands. All orders will be forwarded to the umpire who will plot the subsequent movements, contacts etc and organise any tabletop battles. At the end of that turn the umpire will produce situation reports for the players.

Orders and Communications (Real Time and Game Time)

Timely Orders and Absence from the Campaign. In order for the game to flow it is essential that players forward their orders to the umpire in a timely manner. This ensures that the game flows smoothly and is not held up by individual players. This is meant to be fun however, and we are all aware that real life often gets in the way. If you are not able to meet an order deadline, or family/personal/work problems intervene then please let me know asap. We can easily put the game on hold if required. This does include holidays. For the new players we do have a policy of one verbal warning for failing to comply regarding orders. After that you are out! Mind you, in the past 10 years we have only had to do this once.

Player Communications. ALL communication between players must go through the umpire so that I can keep a record of what is happening at all times. I will save copies of all the correspondence, as well as a photographic record of the map movements of both sides (marked on my master map). At the end of the campaign I will burn copies onto CDs so that each player can have a copy and find out what really happened. Unless I state otherwise, direct communication between players is not allowed.

Communications - File Formats. Please ensure that all communications (orders, reports etc) are e-mailed to me to me as attachments in either .doc or .txt format. This is to allow me to download files to my PC with the minimum work, and to remove the need to cut and paste from e-mails.

Campaign Orders and Reports

Experience in earlier campaigns has shown that a great deal of historical flavour and entertainment can be added to a game by using contemporary staff systems. To this end players are encouraged to role play their characters with regard to writing their orders. In addition, it will make the umpire's task a lot easier if everyone uses a consistent format. Orders and Reports should be written in the format detailed below. This format is the same as that used by the Prussian and Austrian staffs during this period, and would be familiar to staff officers in both armies.

Please note that there is no need to write new orders every day if the existing orders are still in force. A simple comment of "No Change" against the unit concerned will let me know that the unit is carrying on with its existing orders. This will be particularly important if the formation is out of contact with its higher command. You may assume that units will continue with existing orders unless the local circumstances change and force the local commander into a new course of action.

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Prussian Orders were issued in the following format:

To:
Situation (if required)
Orders/Instructions
Signed: Enter name of person issuing order
Place of Issue (location), date and time of issue

Austrian orders followed a similar style but in addition all orders issued by Army HQ were numbered sequentially from the start of a campaign.

Note that movement orders should include the starting location (plus time of departure if necessary), the intended destination (plus intended time of arrival if required) and any transit points en route. Order of March details should also be included if necessary.

Situation Reports should be written in a similar method, giving the situation details in place of the orders section.

Maps

The main map which we will use is the 1850 Perthes Geographicus Map of Bohemia. This was an authoritative map of the region and was well known at the time. A .jpg copy of the map will be sent to each player. I do not have the facilities to print off any copies at full size (the file is quite large – just over 3.5 MB and the full sized printout is quite impressive) so you will have to sort out printing your own. A plotter is best but it can also be printed in sections and stuck together.

Interestingly, for such a detailed map, there is no scale shown on the map. However, after a bit of calculation and checking with satellite imagery I have found out that the distance between the two towns of Trautenau and Nachod is 14.96 miles as the crow flies. Both of these locations can be found to the North and Northeast of Josephstadt and Konnigratz. To keep things simple I have rounded this up to 15 miles. The real distance between these towns on the full sized map is 36mm (2.4mm to the mile) and this easily converts to 10 miles to one inch.

When you print out your maps, if they are not full size simply measure the actual distance between these two points and work out the corresponding scale on your map. Any problems let me know.

Obviously the armies would not just have relied on one map and in any case the main map is too large a scale to allow a detailed study of the terrain. Another useful source of mapping is here:

<http://lazarus.elte.hu/hun/digkonyv/topo/3felmeres.htm>

This is an online archive of early 20th century Austrian military maps cover pretty much the whole of central Europe. They are exceptionally detailed and are the closest we can get to 1866 mapping. They are well worth examining. I have no objection to players downloading or viewing these maps during the campaign. I will certainly be using them to plot the locations of contacts, battles etc and if players wish to use them to decide on a defensive position, or to reconnoitre a route then please feel free to do so. If you do use one of the maps in this way however, then please let me know which sheet you are using and what you are planning on doing with it.

Map Movement

The Perthes map itself shows the main roads, railways, rivers. Towns and high ground/mountains. For game purposes, the main roads will represent good, all weather roads and are suitable for a high volume of traffic (eg artillery and trains on the road, infantry and cavalry marching in the adjacent fields).

All map movement consists of movement from one town to another. This will be fairly straightforward if following a main road. Movement off the main roads is directed from one town to another and is assumed to

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take place along smaller roads, tracks etc. Movement along such routes will be slower, taking into account the poor surfaces, increased risk of getting lost or taking a wrong turn, the effects of bad weather turning roads into mud etc.

For planning purposes you can assume a basic marching rate of 2-2.5 miles per hour for all combat troop types, as it is assumed that most columns will consist of a mix of infantry, artillery and /or cavalry. Trains will move at a slower rate of 1.5-2 mph. Forced marches simply extend the time taken on the march and do not increase the actual marching speed. Players will need to do their own time/distance calculations when planning their movements. I would recommend the use of a pair of dividers (these worked exceptionally well during our 1859 campaign).

Historically troops marched during the daylight hours, unless circumstances dictated otherwise. Cooking etc could take place during the hours of darkness prior to and after the days march. Generally a formation would aim to march for 8 hours, starting at dawn, and finishing its march in the late afternoon. This would allow sufficient light for the rear of the column to close up, make camp, cook etc.

Weather and Daylight Hours

The campaign takes place in summer (June – August). The weather will be generally fine, with occasional periods of hot or wet weather (both occurred during the real campaign). The weather was also affected by the numerous mountains and on hot days sudden late afternoon thunderstorms were not unusual (I have experienced similar weather in the Black Forest).

For game purposes hours of daylight are as follows:

Month	Dawn	Dusk
• June	0430	2030
• July	0430	2030
• August	0500	2000

Orders of Battle and Tabletop Battles

Each player will have detailed OOBs of the forces under his command. These are based on contemporary sources and have been laid out in the well known Fire & Fury format. These orders of battle will have the units strengths shown in F&F format (eg 15/10/5), where each troop stand represents 200 men (infantry or cavalry), and a gun model represents 8 cannon.

The battles will be fought using 15mm figures and a variation on the well known Fire & Fury rules (these rules gave us some excellent games during the 1859 campaign several years ago).

Battles will be played out on the tabletop under the control of the umpire. If the players historical counterparts are close enough to take control or influence the battle then I hope to allow the players time to prepare a plan, issue orders etc. Historically however, the size of the armies and the distances involved usually meant that the battles were fought as encounter battles.

Campaign Objectives

These will be detailed in the various player briefs.

Campaign Logistics and Lines of Communication

The logistics for both sides failed at crucial moments. This will be built into the campaign rules and monitored by the umpire. Both sides faced similar problems, but the causes of the problems differed in each army.

Prussian Logistics Problems

The Prussian logistic effort failed because firstly, insufficient horsepower and carrying capacity was mobilised

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prior to the start of the campaign, secondly, because the overworked corps trains could not keep up with the advancing troops and finally, the supplies stockpiled at the rail heads could not be transported forwards fast enough. As a result the German armies (particularly the Elbe and 1st Armies) frequently had to halt in or near a major town to either requisition local supplies or to wait for the trains to catch up. In any case the lack of supplies meant that after several days marching/fighting the Prussian troops were seriously fatigued and needed to rest.

Austrian Logistics Problems

The major problem suffered by the Austrian army was the poor staff planning which invariably directed several corps along the same or adjacent roads with little or no traffic control. This resulted in the different formations becoming mixed up or forced off the road, with the resulting traffic jams and delays. As usual the trains were at the rear and became intermingled. In practice the trains often simply stopped until the road cleared.

Despite the causes, the net result was pretty much the same for both sides, giving the commanders the option of halting to rest and feed the troops, or of pressing on and fighting with tired and exhausted men. Fortunately for both sides Bohemia was rich in resources and an ample supply of food and drink could be collected quickly within a day or two while the troops rested.

The OOBs supplied to the players will include details of the military train, engineer and administrative units attached to each formation. Although these will not be represented by models the location of these units will be recorded by the umpire. Players should include the movement orders for trains etc in their orders and also remember to include them in the order of march where necessary.

Interestingly enough, I can find no evidence of the armies running out of ammunition (although the battle of Konnigratz did severely deplete artillery ammunition for both armies). From this I will assume that the divisional and corps ammunition trains and parks had sufficient munitions for the duration of the campaign. If there are a number of large battles however then I will have to look at this again.

While it will be assumed that the appropriate supply staff officers etc are doing their jobs Players will be responsible for ordering rest days, halts for foraging etc, The umpire will keep track of the physical state of the troops. Lack of rest, insufficient halts to allow the trains to catch up, difficult weather (eg extreme heat or heavy rain – both of which are possible) will exacerbate the problems of supply. Players will receive reports from local commanders informing them of the state of their troops as required. Troops who are thrown into battle unfed, exhausted etc will be penalised on the day. The exact form of any penalty will be announced to players at the start of any battle.

As an example, just prior to Konnigratz the Austrian army had several days to sort themselves out, and to rest and feed the troops. On the morning of the battle the 6th Corps had sufficient time to cook a proper meal before forming up and was also issued an extra alcohol ration. Needless to say morale was high and some soldiers were reported as being drunk when ordered into action.

Another example – a Prussian division, which had outrun its supply train, bivouacked in the grounds of a large estate noted for producing very good beer. The barrels were broached and the troops refreshed themselves until late into the night. It was subsequently reported that the division was slow forming up the following morning and was late in setting off on the day's march. Not hard to figure out why...

Line of Communication (LoC)

The LoC will not just be concerned with the forward movements of supplies and munitions. It will also be the line of retreat (if necessary) and the route taken by communications up and down the chain of command. Players must therefore ensure that they both protect their LoC and keep the umpire up to date with the route taken by the LoC.

Each player will be allocated a Depot which will form the start of his line of communication (these will be the ones used historically at the start of the campaign). The Depot will usually be a fortress or major town. The

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line of communication may be extended through successive towns as the player's HQ moves through them. As long as the LoC is unbroken the player's forces will receive the benefits of supplies and regular communications.

While operating in enemy territory the players may not change their Depot location, so their LoC will grow longer as the game progresses. Players operating inside friendly territory may change their Depot during the course of their manoeuvrings. This may be done by moving their HQ to the new Depot location (again this should be a fortress or major town). Once the new location selected they will then need to inform the umpire of the new LoCs for each of their formations.

Formations whose LoC is cut or broken suffer the consequences (reduced supplies, slower marching speed due to the need to forage, shortages of munitions, loss of communications etc).

Telegraphs and transmission of orders and reports

HQs which remain stationary in a town along a main road, or a town with a railway line running through it, may use the telegraph system to transmit and receive orders and reports to their senior commanders. These will usually be received within several hours of transmission regardless of distance. All other communications will be carried by couriers on horseback in the traditional manner and risk the usual delays, capture etc.

If in doubt...

Some years back I ran a campaign using the Empire Napoleonic Campaign System. These covered pretty much every detail and were so complex as to be virtually unplayable except in a small game. So, rather than rely on complex rules much of the umpiring will be done as a form of *Kreigspiel*, relying on my own knowledge of the period, a good period reference library of some 20+ volumes, and my own experience of military operations and how things can go wrong even with modern communications.

Most of the players will have many years of reading and learning about the Napoleonic and later 19th century wars, while a number of you also have relevant military experience and will also understand how and why things can go wrong! Those who don't will have taken part in previous campaigns and will have learned from earlier mistakes.

Armed with this knowledge don't expect to find a rulebook with everything written down in black and white. If you are not sure what to do in a given circumstance think about how your historical counterpart would have acted and issue the appropriate orders. It might just work! In any case, I will only be an e-mail away in case of queries etc. The main thing however is to have fun.